LP
5012
855
554

Queen's University
Library

KINGSTON, ONTARIO

CHRIST'S CLAIMS,

AND THE

CLAIMS OF HIS CAUSE.

A TRACT FOR THESE TIMES.

BY A MERCHANT.

"When ye shall have done all those things which are commanded you, say, we are unprofitable servants: we have done that which was our duty to do."
"Thou therefore endure hardness as a good soldier of Jesus Christ."

MONTREAL:
PRINTED BY JOHN LOVELL, SAINT NICHOLAS STREET.
1855.

LI
F5012
1855
M554

UNIVERSITY OF MINNESOTA

A TRACT FOR THESE TIMES.

The Writer desires to call attention to the duty — the personal and present duty — of Christians, in respect of Christ's claims and the claims of His cause. Not without solicitude does he venture upon the attempt. So much that is good is now-a-days written — good in itself, and coming with the sanction of known names — that this Tract will perhaps be laid aside without perusal by the majority even of the few into whose hands it may fall. Still it may have some readers; and as his aim and hope are to be enabled to present facts and thoughts which may, to some extent, influence to earnest consideration of duty, and to adequate discharge of it, if there shall be even a few readers, and they so influenced, his endeavour will not be in vain, nor his hope disappointed.

The conviction is strong upon his mind, that God's people are, as a whole, far — far indeed — short of duty in the matter of devotedness of themselves, and what they are and what they have, to Him who hath bought them, and in their efforts to spread the knowledge of His name throughout the earth. Christ's claims upon His people, if they are in theory admitted, are largely in practice denied. Covetousness was never more than it now is the sin of the Church, and consequently never more than now was it needful to say, "take heed and beware of covetousness." Nor ever more than now was it needful to beseech God's people to present themselves a living sacrifice, in personal and active efforts to advance Christ's kingdom in the world. One tenth-part of the power which the Church possesses is not put forth in the service of the Great Head of the Church, although the world needs, and He commands its use. For this non-use of power account must one day be given. Tremendous in its consequences is this neglect of duty. Consideration of this whole matter, each one for himself, is urgently needed, and is here respectfully but earnestly urged. Would that it were in view of these claims, the earnest question of the reader and of the writer: Lord, what wilt thou have me to do? and theirs, too, the intelligent response, Thy will in Thy strength, Lord, we will do. This would be a happy and practical result.

120796

CHRIST'S CLAIMS.

The great facts, that there is none righteous — no, not one ; that all the world is guilty before God, condemned, and receiving death as the wages of sin ; and that God so loved the world that he gave his only begotten Son, who also gave himself, that whosoever believeth in Him should not perish, but have everlasting life ; and that now God is in Christ reconciling the world unto himself, are unknown, as revealed truths, to most of mankind. They are amid darkness into which none of the rays of revelation yet penetrate. They know not of Christ, nor of His claims. And thus, in this awful moral gloom, grovelling and groping, are still probably 600,000,000 of our race.

But these facts of man's guilt and danger, of Christ's redemption work, and of man's obligation to accept the Saviour, are truths known to those, — and they are now many, — who have the Bible ; and none will deny them who do not deny that book. They know these things, and they stand, consequently, as to responsibility, upon ground entirely different from those without such knowledge. And to them the command comes, "Believe on the Lord Jesus Christ, for he that believeth shall be saved, and he that believeth not shall be damned." To all possessors of the Book is this message sent. But of these while some do, many, alas! do not accept this salvation, and yield themselves to this Saviour, and hence it comes that there must be still another division separating those who believe and those who do not believe. Wonderful it is, when we think of it, that this is so. Beings of a higher world doubtless look with feelings which we have not words to describe upon readers of the Bible — their God's message and terms of pardon to His fallen creature, man — in divided companies : the one a large number rejecting Christ, and—a broad and distinct line, that of faith, between them—the other still a small company who have received and who rejoice in and serve that Saviour. But the ground of this separation must be further shown. The distinction needs a little to be dwelt upon. God's law to man is plain enough : "Thou shalt love the Lord thy God with all thy heart and soul and mind and strength, and thy neighbour as thyself." Consider these words. God to be loved with the whole heart, during every moment of life! How worthy of God this

law! It requires from each one a perfect unbroken obedience, without failure once in life. It claims all the affections and all the powers always for God. Failing once of this the condemnation follows. Has, then, God been so loved? No; not for one moment in the whole life of any one of us has He been so loved. Have the affections and powers been so yielded to Him? No; not once. However moral may be the outer life, this *positive* character of the inner man is claimed of all, but in no one is it found. How obvious then is the condemnation! Every one is brought in guilty before God; all are condemned. Now here, just at this point, it is, when the sinner is without remedy or hope in himself, that Christ interposes his perfect sinless obedience, rendered in the sinner's stead, and imputed to the sinner, who by faith accepts it, and He thus "becomes the end of the law for righteousness to every one who believes." Faith is here the condition, the essential; justification by faith is the doctrine; "Believe" is the command. Christ's claim here upon you, the individual, is direct and personal; for your acceptance of Him, and love of Him as your Saviour and King, for a surrender of yourself to Him, evermore to suffer and to do His will. Reader, dost thou so believe in Christ? *Has this first claim He makes upon you been yielded to?* Consider the awful alternative. You do to-day either receive or reject Him. Be entreated, be encouraged; believe—"That being made free from sin, and become servants to God, ye have your fruit unto holiness, and the end everlasting life."

They then, only, who have thus yielded to God's will and command to believe in the Lord Jesus Christ whom he hath sent, who believing are justified, and who being justified are also by the Spirit sanctified, having the righteousness of Christ imputed, and the righteousness of the Spirit inwrought — they only are, in the Bible sense, Christians — Christ's followers. They keep together in practical view these twin statements: "without shedding of blood there is no remission of sins," and "without holiness no man can see the Lord." One of old, whose case is recorded for our instruction, affords a fine exemplification of the Christian, of this highest style of man. Trembling and astonished he cries, "Lord, what wilt thou have me to do?" Here is the surrender: here are the spirit and the attitude of the servant waiting to *know*

that he may *do* his Master's will ; here is allegiance avowed. Next he is introduced to us with the words, "Behold he prayeth"—words so full and so significant of character,—telling of the breathings of the inner life. Further on he is presented at work, in earnest action labouring to build up that Kingdom which once he laboured to destroy; and still counting not himself to have apprehended or to be already perfect, forgetting those things which were behind, and reaching forth unto those things which were before, he presents himself a living sacrifice to Christ. In this Gospel sketch, which is worthy of close study, there is the complete Christian character. Here are practical submission and obedience to Christ's claims; and here the individual appears as consistent with the often-repeated scriptural representation of the Christian, as the servant and the soldier of Christ.

Now, if the Christian is a servant and soldier of Christ, there is a work for him to do, and a warfare to wage. He has been viewed as not his own, but bought with a price, and devoted to the service of Him who hath bought him. And upon each one and all of such rests now the command,—they are successors to it, —"Go ye into the world, and preach the Gospel to every creature." Their mission is, as His followers, to turn men from darkness to light, and from the power and kingdom of satan unto God. Themselves redeemed and renewed, there dwells in them that same kind of love which impelled their Lord and Master to give himself for a world that had wandered and was lost, to redeem it; so that with love and duty to Him impelling them, there is also compassion for the lost and ardent desire to reclaim them to Christ.

But it is needful to consider the present condition of the world as to this Gospel, in order to estimate aright the duty of Christ's people in relation to it. What then is the condition of the world? As already stated, there are probably 600,000,000 of the world's people without this Gospel, amid the darkness and degradation which sin has induced, at enmity with God, and ruled by the prince of the power of this world,—an awful multitude hastening to eternal death! "They have changed the glory of the incorruptible God into an image made like to corruptible man, and to birds, and four-footed beasts, and creeping things;"—at enmity with God, and filled with all unrighteousness;—the subjects of a fearful usurpation!

Besides these, there are probably 150 to 200,000,000 who have been reached by some rays of Gospel light, but who are still the followers of the false prophet, or the subjects of a system of will worship and superstition, "who do not obey the truth, but obey unrighteousness." Now, God having announced mercy to all these, and commissioned His people to proclaim it; Christ, having redeemed the world, is to regain it, in spite of all opposition; these dark places are to be made light; the kingdom and the glory are to be His. And the instruments He employs to effect this are men—not "legions of angels," but men whom He has redeemed from among men,—weak things of the flesh,—soldiers of the cross,—they who, being salt, are to leaven the world's mass of corruption,—they who, being light, are to give light, to spread it, advancing as from a centre, and dispelling darkness before it,—they who, being servants, are to go forth and persuade men to come into this Kingdom, and who, being soldiers, as the Lord's host, are to win back this world to Him. Think of these millions to be brought to Christ! What a work the Church has to do! Words are weak to tell it; figures fail to express it. But if Christian people would think of it—would really think of it—they would realize some impression; and if they would pray to the Lord to show them His claims and the claims of His cause, and to show them the work He has for them to do, they would then, doubtless, to some extent see these things in their true light. But the solemn enquiry is, are these claims of Christ heeded? As matter of theory many know them; but are they embodied into life and action; are His people working for Him wholly and in earnest? Have they fulfilled, do they now fulfill, their mission to the world? The records of eighteen centuries answer, No! and the cries of the perishing world to-day still respond a widely-echoed No!

It will doubtless be conceded that Christ has put this duty and responsibility upon His Church; and it follows, does it not? that they have instrumentally the power. From this conclusion there seems no escape. If this be true, having failed so much, and come so short, what an account is to be given! No attempt is here made to put in words the failure, and the sin, and the accountability here involved. They are topics too solemn and too vast;

but they should be pondered. Yet true it must be held to be. If it be true, that of things material there is enough for all, but that one man holds in excess, withholds, what another is deficient of,—that one wastes what another wants: if it be true, that one people holds in excess and under restriction that which another people needs, and which nature designed that by interchange it should obtain; is it not true, that when Christ gave His Gospel, the bread of life, to man, and bade him carry it to his fellow-man everywhere, and promised His efficient spirit, subject to their faith and prayer, to go with it, He put into his hands all that instrumentally was needed to effect his mission? Had all Christ's people always, at His feet, which is the only true start-point of Christian effort, said, as Paul said, "Lord, what wilt thou have me to do?" and had it always been true of them as it was of Paul, "he prayeth;"—and here is the chief power, for the Lord has promised His spirit, and to work himself, in answer to prayer; prayer being thus potential;—and then if, after consecration and prayer—this potential prayer—had they been in all these generations past, like Paul, at work in their Master's service, in what condition, as to the Gospel, would the world be in now?

But the Church has been straitened in herself. Like those in the parable, she has long stood all the day idle; she has withheld prayer; she has not used her power; nor now, with all the advance she has made, does "she apprehend that for which she is apprehended of Christ." Alas, no! one-tenth of her power is not used. In other words, supposing that 10 out of every 100 of Christ's people meet to the full his claims, 90 remain of those who are called his servants and his soldiers, who are idle and useless in his cause; just as much as 90 laborers of 100 would be, who, hired for the harvest, should they stand with folded arms, and implements idle at their side, letting the ripe corn rot upon the field; or as 90 soldiers of 100 ordered on active service would be, who should stand at ease in the barrack yard, instead of rushing into earnest conflict with the foe, while the battle raged in the plain beyond.

Safely, we think, in detail and enforcement of this general one, may the several propositions be advanced. — That there should be 10 men on the mission field for 1 there is; there should be 10

preachers and city missionaries for 1 there is; there are needed 10 Sabbath schools and teachers for 1 there is; there should be issued 10 Bibles for 1 there is;—ponder here the fact that there are not yet 50,000,000 Bibles in the world to over 800,000,000 people;—there should be 10 tracts circulated for 1 there is; there should be 10 men working the religious and benevolent societies of the day for 1 there is; and of money, that thing which Christians so much cling to, yet that least thing they can give to Christ and His cause, of it, we venture the proposition, there should be £100 given for 1 there is. In other words, there needs to be personal and active agency multiplied 10 fold, and money multiplied 100 fold — both given to the Lord. Some of these statements may meet dissent, nor would it be easy to adduce figures to sustain them; but it is earnestly submitted whether investigation of given cases, applying them in a wide induction, and estimating the means in the hands of Christ's people, in the Scripture light of His claims and the claims of His cause upon themselves and all they have and are, would not establish their truth to the satisfaction of the candid Christian mind.

Anxious and earnest consideration of duty in this respect, of each one for himself, is needed, and readiness to do what is found to be duty. And were His people fully using their power in this way, the Lord would give more to be used;—so the Scriptures teach. Then would His cause advance. But earthly standards of comparison are followed; and far too low these standards are One gives as another gives; one withholds his efforts because another withholds. Thus measuring themselves among themselves they are not wise. Every one must give account for himself.

Less should man be looked at, more should Christ and His claims be looked at. Not should it be asked, what does my neighbor, but what demands my Saviour? and if we are to be influenced by example, let the widow who "gave her all," and was commended, and Paul, who "fought a good fight," and spent himself, and was approved, be our examples.

Ascending from the individual to the national duty and responsibility, what if Britain and America — the nations of missions, in which nearly all the religious power of the world lies—had fully discharged their high mission! How different would the world be. If

God permitted ancient Rome long to live, that she might mature and then give to the world her language, her literature, and her laws; so we believe has God suffered England long as a nation to endure,—and if she yet endure, it still is,—that she herself and by her offshoots — some of them nations like herself — may give the world a higher civilization and a truer Christianity. But exalted as their position among the nations is, what higher greatness would be theirs, had they fully performed their moral mission to the world! and this mission, which we believe still is theirs, affords the best basis of the patriot's hope for their national prosperity and permanence and peace.

But to insist yet more upon Christ's claims, and the claims of a lost world upon His people, they must be looked at as they bear upon the individual Christian. Individual power and responsibility were never more recognized than they are now-a-days. The individual is not lost in the masses, nor must the individual responsibility of the Christian be lost in that of the Church. He needs to remember that each one contributes to the character of the whole. How much the courage and ardour of one of a company of soldiers act upon the whole! Many of the incidents of the war now raging, in which, as has been said of the soldiers of our country by one competent to judge, each man proves himself a hero, illustrate this. And not only this point of the appreciation of the individual man, but the whole subject of Christ's claims upon His people, has illustration in this war.

Christians have been called subjects and soldiers of Christ. Are they acting in a way consistent with this? See the subjects and soldiers of Russia illustrate *submission*, of England *duty*, of France *glory;* as those of Russia move on in ready submission to the will of one, their master, or those of France prompted by the love of martial glory, or those of England under the high constrainings and inspirations of duty, the soldiers of Christ are instructed. These are all found in the warfare in which Christ calls his people to engage,—prompt and implicit obedience to his will; yielding self, life, all to duty; and glory, why all along the path of Christ's service there is glory — not what the world counts, but what is nevertheless true glory! What deeds of heroic daring, determination and devotion, have soldiers of our country done on yonder

distant field of the Crimea! Would to God there were amongst all Christ's soldiers such heroism, such constancy, such daring and devotion of self, for the cause of truth and righteousness, and for the freedom of mankind from the slavery of sin, of which cause Christ is the Great Captain.

Now the appeal comes to each of Christ's followers, so to give himself to His cause. To give his time, his talent, his influence, his money, his all, to Him: — in his own soul, in his family, in and through his secular calling, in his social circle, and in all the circumstances and relations of life, in all its conditions, so to serve and glorify Him.

What is now most demanded of the Church? Men; everywhere the call is for men. The harvest is great, but the laborers are few. Men are needed devoted wholly to the Gospel work,— as Missionaries to the heathen, as Missionaries to the cities at home, as Pastors, as Teachers, as Catechists, as Colporteurs; in every department of Christian enterprize men are now needed; they are asked for from all lands. "We would commission to-morrow," said a Secretary of the American Tract Society, "100 Colporteurs, could we find them." "We would engage to-day," said a Secretary of the American Board for Foreign Missions, "50 Missionaries could we get them." Both these statements are of recent utterance; they announce a present demand. Missionary and Bible, and Tract Societies in our own Canada are calling for men. Hearken to the call, young men of the Churches! Give yourselves to your Master's service on these high places of the field. And they who do not go forth, but who remain in secular pursuits, who are of the home department, upon them lie special obligations to sustain those who are in the field. Money, needful in all enterprize, they are called upon to furnish, devoting to the Master's cause of their earnings, whether mechanical, or mercantile, or professional, not a mere nothing, a trifle, but a-tenth, or a-fourth, or a-third, or a-half, as proper and dutiful regard to those of their own household, and having claims upon them shall determine. And when there shall be acquired enough to meet these latter claims, then giving the *whole* of their earnings to Christ's cause, and still working on at their callings, just that they may continue still to give; not refusing wealth, but

using it, and the influence and position which it gives, as means of usefulness, and laying all, together with themselves, at their Redeemer's feet. Does not he reasonably claim this of his people? And in how many ways further do His claims appear? They are called to aid in all social ameliorations, to promote education, and to encourage art and science. Religion does not oppose, but sanctions their duties of citizenship. The poor, who are always with them, have claims upon their personal sympathies and direct and ready help. To a true and hearty sympathy with sinful and suffering humanity, in all forms of its suffering, they are to add diligent and faithful efforts to mitigate and assuage its ills. The widow and the fatherless have Christ's warrant upon them for their help. The friend of the friendless,—their Master's representatives on earth, helpers of all institutions of benevolence, which indeed are but the reflections of the Christianity they profess, should they be. The poor, we fear, Christ's people too much forget. To the Levitical teachings and the Gospel teachings, which are distinct on this duty, they need to give a higher practical regard.

Then the sustentation of those who are wholly devoted to the Lord's service, whether at home or abroad, as missionaries to the heathen, or pastors of the Churches, must come from them. Here the Church is impolitic, as well as niggardly and unjust. More liberal and generous dealing is needed. Better would it be for the pastors, the Churches, and the world, were there juster and larger views of this claim.

Moreover, Sunday School, Tract, Bible, Missionary, and kindred Associations have claims, which they derived from Him whose work they are doing, upon the Church for men and money,—money to maintain, men to start, and push, and work them. In short, in all the enterprizes of the Church, which are doing the Lord's work, and asserting His claims upon the world, and through which also He presents His claims upon His people, should they be found, sinking denominational and national distinctions, united in these sacred enterprizes as the regiments of one army, and the allies of one cause, as we have lately seen them in the battles of the nations, "cheering and charging together" against the common foe.

In the warfare in which our country is engaged we find illustration of some further duties of Christ's people, as subjects. There have been battles which were signal victories, but which were, nevertheless, destructive of many of the brave ones who won them. Disease also, sorer to bear, and more destructive, carried off its thousands. As the tidings of all this reached their native shores, how ready were many to rally to the aid of the survivors. "As the danger increased, the desire to enlist in the service increased." The sympathies of the people were excited alike by victories and by the sufferings of the victors. The national heart was set a beating; vacant places were filled; sickness and wounds were ministered to; comforts and consolations were supplied. Now, just so Christ has his army upon active service,—Missionaries to the heathen, Pastors, Colporteurs, and others, upon the high places of the field. These are engaged in active conflict in His cause. There are deeds heroic, and worthy of the King they serve, recorded of them. Missionary history is full of such:—sufferings are endured, serious sacrifices are made; many fall upon the field. But many battles too are won. Now, as to those "at home," not upon this active service, how is it? Do their bosoms move and swell with sympathies as they hear of victories achieved and trophies won for Christ? Have they the loyal heart? Are they ready to fill the places of the fallen? Are the honour and the glory of Christ's kingdom dear to them? Are they moved to go out upon this service, to aid their brethren there, and to assert their Master's claim upon the world? Sadly, too little is it so. Disloyalty may be charged upon them. Difficulties there are, but do they not too much deter? They must be overcome. Sacrifices are demanded. Where and when are there not difficulties? What of the common engagements of life, in domestic relations, or in commerce, are exempt from them? What worthy object or effort is without its obstructions? This is a condition of things here.

As well in nature as in human life struggles and difficulties are seen. Upon the margin of our river ice began some months ago to form,—a process of nature had commenced. It went on; but a change came; adverse influences operated; what had formed then yielded, and broke away; progress made was lost. But cold severer

came again, and the water, now weaker in resistance, yielded; ice formed again, extending, till another change and check, but that not long to last; for soon the needful conditions came again, and rapidly the process advanced, till winter's triumph was achieved, and the waters, which had been not long before open and free, were then, in spite of all their struggling and resistance, fast in its icy bonds. Upon those same waters, not long since, man was exerting his ingenuity and power to establish a way across their expansive channel. A great undertaking was in hand; progress was made. What triumph of mind over matter here! But winter comes,—the time of trial;—matter assumes new form, and in its then accumulated power bears away much of the achievement, and we looked disappointed upon the damage and the ruin it had caused! But is the enterprize abandoned? Not because of this check will it be, for doubtless mind will here, as she has often done before, assert her supremacy and triumph.

Nor shall the difficulties and disappointments, and times of darkness and of trial, which are found in moral enterprizes, have more power. They are the test of motive and of purpose. They will be seen and felt but to be striven against and overcome. Christ calls his people to sacrifices and denials for his cause. He gave himself for them. He who was rich for their sakes became poor. He claims from them themselves — their all. And going forth in His name and for His glory to His work He makes them to overcome; and His servants, the more difficulties they encounter, the more they achieve for Him, the humbler still they are. This mark is on them. Humility is the livery of His servants; love is the uniform of his soldiers; and the greater their usefulness and the higher their honours in His service, the lower in the depths of their own souls are they prostrate at His feet. "Without me, severed from me, ye can do nothing," is His claim. "Unprofitable servants!"— not unto us, O Lord, not unto us, but unto Thy name be the glory, they, responsive, cry.

Finally, in His service there is sure success. *His* cause will triumph; and what a triumph! Yes! the power of sin and satan shall be crushed, and the world shall be won to Christ. Onward, onward to this issue is His cause advancing, and His word makes

it sure. Every victory makes it nearer, and His servants are called to labour, and His soldiers to conflict, with that issue close in view, knowing that their effort of to-day is to help it on, confident of the reward of their service, and the triumph of His cause. Again, to illustrate: the brave men who fell at Alma, Balaclava, and Inkerman were not the less ardent and valiant because they were not at the point of final triumph, because on that day the Crimea was not to fall, nor the campaign to close. No! but in their day they did their duty, and victory then they knew was making victory again more certain. So thought their country, and hence they had and shall have her gratitude and (those of them who survive) her reward, though theirs was not the day of final success. So are the soldiers of the Cross now to do. They know, in fact, the day of final triumph to be distant. They know the conflicts must be many, and many battles must be won; but it is written that Christ shall have the heathen for His inheritance, and of His Kingdom there shall be no end; and faith makes that issue certain to them as if it were to-day. They know that the constancy, and the ardor, and the heroism of every individual soldier through this day's conflict, bear upon the grand result. In their day they do their duty. They glory in the triumph which is to come; *faith makes them partakers of it;* and if "fighting a good fight," they now should fall, they equally with those who fall on the day of that final triumph which angels and the hosts of heaven are to celebrate, shall hear the welcome and have the reward, — "well done good and faithful servant, enter thou into the joy of thy Lord."

In summing up, and in application, will the reader permit and put to himself these questions: —

First. — Have I made surrender of myself, my affections and my will, to Christ? This is His claim.

Second. — Am I devoted actively to His cause? Am I a Sabbath School teacher, or a Bible or Tract distributor? Am I helping to support and work the religious institutions of the day? Are my time and powers devoted to Christ? Am I a servant and a soldier of the Cross?

Third. — Are my sympathies fully with Christ's cause? Do I pray for it? Have I a loyal heart?

Fourth. — Am I withholding myself from the work of a Minister of the Gospel, or Missionary to the heathen?

Fifth. — Do I give my money as the Lord claims it, "according to my ability," to his cause, or do I hold it back? Am I in business for my own purposes only, or have I reference to his claims upon my substance?

Sixth. — When Christ and His cause shall have final triumph, shall I be one of the victors, who, through Him, "have fought a good fight," and conquered?

Seventh. — Shall I have the welcome: "well done good and faithful servant, enter thou into the joy of thy Lord?"

May the reader and the writer both be permitted, in due time, to enter into possession of that joy!

APR 4 1928